Dedicated To No One

By Reyan Onto

About The Author

Reyan Onto is a singer, songwriter, producer, and writer from Dhaka, Bangladesh. He has lived most of his life with a condition called panic disorder, which has deeply shaped his journey as an artist. From a young age, Reyan began writing lyrics and exploring music, later creating projects under names such as *False Correction*, *Reyan Onto*, *Reyan The Rebel*, and *4th Redemption*.

In 2023, he became a scholarship holder and the winner of the NAS Academy Creator Accelerator Program (June Batch). Despite struggling with a crippling condition in a country where art and content creation are often overlooked as professions, Reyan continued to pursue his passion. Over the years, he has also worked as a freelance video editor for various YouTube channels, blending his creativity across multiple forms of expression.

Reyan began writing this book simply as a way to pass time. After creating three albums within a single year, he turned to writing in September, thinking that the following year he might have to move to a new place where his creativity could fade under the pressure of regular jobs and the challenges of settling in a new country. His heart fractured when he realized the change he had been waiting for would never come. In that moment, all sense of purpose slipped away, leaving only emptiness behind.

At first, he didn't believe finishing the book would be possible. But when heartbreak struck, writing became his refuge. What started as a distraction slowly turned into determination. This story had been living in his mind for a long time, and he finally decided to bring it to life on these pages.

Disclaimer:
This story is a work of complete fiction. Names, characters, places, events, and incidents are products of the author's imagination. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, real events, or locales is purely coincidental. The events depicted in this book are not intended to represent real-life occurrences, and any similarities are unintentional.

Chapter 1 :
The Face Of Death

I am staring at a corpse. They say this is the body of my father. Yet… I feel nothing. It's as if something is missing. I can see the body clearly, but I sense no presence of the man I once called my father.

Someone whispered, *"Ariyan, stop looking at him. Go to your family for now."* So, I turned away.

On the way back home, a realization sank in: the living organism lying there no longer carried the essence of my father. Perhaps it was because his soul had already left that body. Or… maybe it was because we were never truly close in the first place.

I tried to rewind my memories, searching for moments of happiness I had shared with him—but I found none. He had always been a businessman, gone from home for months at a time. And when he returned, it was usually with a weary, defeated look on his face, forcing a smile as he saw me. I understand now—he smiled to hide the pain of another failed venture, another dream collapsing.

No amount of counseling or psychiatric help could ever save a man who is losing money. Yes, it sounds harsh, and many would disagree. But the truth is undeniable—once you begin to run out of money, society will whisper devilish words about you.

They will say you were never meant for success, that failure was always your destiny. And no matter how tightly we cover our ears, no matter how hard we try to move forward, those words always find a way to reach us—like poison slipping through the cracks.

And once you reach rock bottom, the thoughts of suicide creep in. You begin to tell yourself that the world would be better off if you had never been born.

The man I once called Father chose that path. He ended his life by hanging from a ceiling fan. I still remember coming home from school, opening the door to his room, and finding the corpse. My body froze; I couldn't make a sound. I had seen death before—but this was different. This time, it was a man I knew, who had decided to leave the world on his own terms.

And yet, as the days passed, people began to forget him. That's the cruel truth: even though we like to believe our lives will leave a mark on the world, our stories fade quickly. We are only one of thousands, and the world does not stop—or suffer—when a single story ends too soon.

The sun keeps rising and falling. The moonlight shines. People go to work. People grow old. They make plans, they fail at their plans, they curse God for their misfortune—and then they move on. All the while, they never stop to think about the corpse buried beneath the mud… something we humans choose to call a grave.

It's sad, but it's the truth: the world keeps turning without you.

[End of Chapter 1]

Chapter 2 :
My Demon Has a Name

Ariyan… that was the name they called me by. But I often wondered—was it the name of my soul, or just my body?

For as long as I can remember, I have felt a presence walking beside me wherever I go. It listens to every thought that drifts through my head, as if my mind were never truly my own. At times, it tries to hurt me—but perhaps it has not yet grown strong enough to succeed.

I gave this presence a name. I called it **Knull**.

In school, I always sat alone. I could never connect with the other kids. Perhaps it was because I had nothing in common with them.

Their world was bright and colorful. Their greatest struggle was always with their lovers. They knew nothing of the face of death.

Sometimes they called me immature because I refused to follow in their footsteps. But to me, it was the opposite. I saw no meaning in their desperate quest to hold their relationships together. One way or another, one of them would lose interest. Or they would betray each other. And even if they married, death would come for one first, leaving the other behind—alone, clinging to fading memories, like a bird trapped in a cage.

Oftentimes, we went to school alone. We sat alone, watching the clock tick slowly, while the people around us filled the air with the nonsense of their lives. There was a couple always holding hands in my school.

We could not understand these creatures. Everything this world had to offer bored us. Maybe it was because we preferred video games, comics, R-rated anime, and Hollywood movies, while they were lost in other things.

Of course, we couldn't blame them—people are allowed to have different tastes, aren't they? Even if those tastes were shallow, rotten, and utterly disgusting.

They were the same as us… but a different breed.

One morning, we arrived at school earlier than usual. We sat on the bench, eyes locked on the clock. But the more we stared, the slower it seemed to move—each second dragging like a cruel trick.

Then, something strange happened.

Knull's hands wrapped around my throat. I couldn't breathe. I tried to pull in oxygen, desperate for that familiar rush into my lungs—but nothing came. Again and again, I tried, but the air betrayed me.

My arms turned numb and cold. My body burned as if it were on fire. My heart slammed against my chest so violently I thought it might burst out. My vision blurred.

Is this it? I thought. *Is this the end of my life? I always knew I would die young… but to die this young—what a worthless tragedy.*

A voice cut through the chaos. A teacher, yelling from afar: *"Hey kids, quit screwing around!"*

Through the haze, I saw him. Summoning every ounce of strength left in me, I forced out a scream:

"Help me!"

The teacher rushed back with two glasses of water. But when he came close, I saw the shock in his eyes. Maybe he was spooked by the sight of me—trembling, broken, unrecognizable.

I tried to drink the water, but my throat refused it. The sweet taste couldn't make its way down, as if even water had betrayed me.

I grabbed the teacher's arm, screaming and crying, desperate for someone to understand. But I didn't know what was wrong with me. I didn't know what to say. And worst of all, I didn't know where I could run to escape it.

The suffering felt endless, like an eternity unfolding inside me.

Then I looked at the clock.

Only five minutes had passed.

By the time my mother came rushing to the school, my mind and body had already returned to normal—as if nothing had ever happened.

I didn't go to school for a week. The doctors thought it might be a panic attack. They put me on medication.

At home, I felt safe. I spent my days playing video games, reading comic books, and watching anime. Time moved at a normal pace there. I felt joy. I felt safe in my own skin.

But after a week, I had to return to that place humans called "school."

The moment I walked in, I felt their eyes on me—staring as if I were a corpse, staggering only minutes away from death. Few bothered to speak to me. I was an outcast, untouchable.

But then, one boy approached. He sat at my bench and asked softly if I was okay. He handed me two pieces of bread.

I knew this boy. He was bullied constantly. He had some form of autism, though at the time I didn't understand what that truly meant, and I couldn't help him.

And yet—despite his own suffering—he chose kindness. He chose to reach out.

He chose to be kind to *us*.

He told us his name. It was "David."
[End of chapter 2]

Chapter 3 :
The Hollow Obsession

David told us that I was often looking at a girl from the classroom. She was pretty. She had long hair. Her smile was like watching the sunrise after a long night.

David whispered, *"Instead of just staring, maybe you should talk to her. Who knows? She might be kinder than you think."*

I carried his advice like a fragile secret. On my birthday, I finally gathered the courage. My hands trembled, my voice almost cracked, but I stood in front of her.

Before I could say a word, she smiled and said, *"Happy birthday."*

For a moment, I thought I had misheard.
I asked, *"Wait… how did you know it was my birthday?"*

She laughed softly, as if it was the most natural thing in the world.
"It's crazy, but… we're birthday twins."

My world stopped. In a life where every surprise had been cruel, here was a surprise that felt like a gift. For once, the universe didn't feel like it was laughing at me—it felt like it was gently reaching out, saying, *"You're not alone."*

There was a couple in my school. Sometimes I saw them holding hands, whispering to each other as if their love was the only thing worth living for, the only thing to look forward to.

At first, I couldn't understand them. But now… I wondered if this could be a way to change myself. Perhaps it could make the world feel less like a hellish place, if only for a moment.

Over the next few days, I found myself looking for her, trying to strike up conversations whenever I could. And every time I did, it felt like the entire class was staring at me—judging, shocked, perhaps amazed at how I was changing.

And the worst part? I kinda… liked it.

After a while, David leaned over and said, *"You should really tell her how you feel. You know… propose or something."*

I laughed at him. *"Propose? Are you kidding me? I don't want to look like a clown. Giving flowers, getting down on my knees… that's not me."*

Then David said, *"Look, time on this earth is short. You should really try to enjoy life—feel the sunshine, take risks, just live. Sometimes all it takes is one step to make life worth living."*

I thought about it for a moment and finally said, *"Alright… I'll do it. But only after I finish the upcoming final exam."*

David laughed, shook my hand, and together we said, *"Deal."*
[End of Chapter 3]

Chapter 4 :
Death in the Shadow of Desire

The finals were over, and it was finally time to do what I had promised David. I bought flowers and set off to see her.

I looked around for David, but he wasn't there. At the school gate, I saw him leaving. I didn't think much of it and continued on my way.

Then I saw her.

She was kissing a man, her eyes shining with pride as she whispered, *"Darling, I came out at the top of my class with flying colors."*

In that instant, everything crashed down. She wasn't in love with me. She had only ever thought of me as a friend. Perhaps she had taken pity on me, trying to cheer me up—but nothing more.

I dropped the flowers and walked back home, feeling time pass strangely fast. The world moved on around me, but my heart had stopped.

It was 12:00 AM when my phone rang. I answered, expecting David's voice—but it wasn't him.

It was his mother.

What I heard next turned my heart into stone.

She told me David was gone. He had jumped in front of a train. He had taken his own life.

His grades had been slipping for a while. No matter how hard he tried, he could never achieve the results he wanted. And in the finals… he had failed, and the school had expelled him.

She said he hated the school—the bullying, the whispers, the cruelty of people who never gave him a chance. But he had always spoken highly of me. He considered me his only friend.

I went to the funeral. The bullies were there too. Strangely, they were the ones crying the most.

As I looked down at David's body, I saw his eyes, lifeless, staring back at me. I remembered my father and the same question formed in my mind:

"Why don't I feel anything? Is it because this corpse has no life in it… or was the David I knew only the soul of this body?"

It was a bright, sunny day, without a single cloud in the sky. And yet… it was raining.

A few days later, the school held a graduation ceremony. The humans there were happy. I noticed an empty seat—surely it was meant for David. But he was gone.

The couple who had always held hands back in school were no longer together. They had broken up and married other people. I found it ironic—how these humans thought they were better than us.

I realized I had no friends here, except Knull. And Knull wasn't really a friend—it was an imaginary presence.

Knull told me to leave. We have no one here.

I got up and left the school. Suddenly, my vision blurred. The world spun. Then blackness. Perhaps I had fainted.

When I opened my eyes, I saw a scene that shook me to my core.

Fire burned people alive. Screams tore through the air as skin melted and lives were ripped apart. I looked at my hands—they were covered in blood. I screamed, every ounce of power in my body, and…

Then, I was back in school.

I recognized the classroom—it was where I had my first panic attack. Where Knull had first attacked me.

I looked around and saw Knull. His smile was devilish, horrifying. The skin on his mouth tore, blood pouring down as the grin widened. He lunged at me.

I screamed for help.

The same teacher appeared and stopped the attack.

When the episode ended, a person approached me, placing a hand on my shoulder. *"Don't worry,"* the voice said.

I looked up.

And I whispered, trembling,
"David?"

[End of Chapter 4]

Chapter 5 :
The Hours We Borrow

David looked at me and said, *"You look like you just saw a ghost… haha."*

I froze for a few moments. *"I… I didn't realize you knew my name,"* David said.

Then a thought struck me. *Maybe this is what people call déjà vu,* I thought.

I asked him softly, *"Are you… okay? Is something wrong?"*

David laughed and shook his head. *"Dude… I'm not the one who just had a panic attack. You idiot."*

I realized that even if this was just déjà vu, I had another chance—to make things right with my friend.

I was not the only character in this godforsaken world. I was not the only one with problems.

I needed to care for my friends more, because all of them had their stories. And my story… my story was just one among thousands.

My mom came to the school, but this time I told her, *"I'm fine. It's just a panic attack—it happens. I'm back to normal. You don't have to worry, go back to your work. I have important classes today; I don't want to miss them."*

So, my mother went back.

David looked at me and said, *"Dude… if I had the chance to miss school, I would've taken it. And you were sick a while back—you should've gone with your mom and taken a few days off."*

I told David, *"My house is boring. I have more fun here at school."* (I lied.)

David raised an eyebrow. *"Dude… all you do is sit at your bench and stare at the clock like you're dying to get back home."*

I nodded. *"Yes, I do that sometimes. But now… I want to do things differently. This time, things will be okay."*

David smirked and asked, *"This time?"*

I spent the entire day talking with David. He lived far from the school and usually came on foot, since his parents were always struggling with money.

He had two little sisters, both healthy and doing well in school. David told me he tried to study, but he couldn't remember a lot of things, no matter how hard he tried.

I sensed it had something to do with his autism.

I told David, *"Don't worry, we'll study together. I don't really have much to do at school anyway."*

David smiled slightly.

Suddenly, someone shoved a school bag over David's back and started attacking him. It was the bullies.

I didn't hesitate. I stood up, grabbed one of them by the head, and slammed him onto the bench.

The bully fainted. My heart raced—I was terrified I had just killed someone.

His friends quickly grabbed him and poured water over his face. A few minutes later, he woke up.

They stared at me, bewildered. *"We were just messing around—why did you try to kill Saifur?"*

I swallowed hard. *"I'm sorry… I've never gotten into a fight before. I was just trying to protect David."*

Saifur—the boss of the bullies—stepped forward, his face twisted in anger. *"You're lucky you're such a sick kid. If you were anyone else, I'd have killed you after school. Consider this your final warning."*

When they finally left, David ran up to me, eyes wide with excitement. *"Dude… that was awesome! You're like a real-life superhero!"*

I rubbed the back of my neck. *"Sorry, I don't know what got into me. I just… I can't stand seeing someone being bullied, especially a kid like you."*

David grinned. *"Speaking of being a superhero… I saw you looking at Joana a lot. Are you thinking of making her your 'Mary Jane,' Spider-Man?"*

I froze for a second, unsure how to respond, but a small smile crept onto my face.

I realized Joana was the name of the girl I had a crush on.

In that moment, it hit me—I had missed out on so much in school. I hardly knew anyone. I had an imaginary friend… and one real friend I barely knew.

This classroom was full of children with names, stories, dreams. And I had ignored every single one of them.

For what?

The next day at school, the teacher asked, *"Is anyone interested in joining the science fair? We already have one team, but we're looking for more participants."*

Without hesitation, I stood up. *"Me! David and I—we're going to make a video game!"*

David's eyes widened, a huge grin spreading across his face. *"Wait… seriously? We're actually doing this?"*

"Yes!" I said, feeling a rush of excitement. *"This time, we're doing it together. And we're going to make it !"*

The teacher looked spooked. *"Okay… when did you start talking? I thought the cat had your tongue. And a video game, you say? I know nothing about this, but if you need any help, let me know. We'll try to support you."*

I nodded and said, *"Me, David, and Saifur—we're going to be a team."*

David froze. *"Wait… Saifur?!"*

Saifur laughed. *"Ariyan, you're an interesting character. But if it means I get to hang out with my bestie David, I'll gladly join your team."*

David's eyes widened, and I couldn't help but grin. This was going to be… interesting.

I invited David and Saifur to my house and pitched the idea of a general knowledge quiz game.

"The game will start at a medium difficulty," I explained. *"But if a player gets a question wrong, the music will switch to something intense, and the questions will get much harder. If they lose three answers in a row, the game ends."*

Saifur, despite being a bully, was actually a talented student. *"I'll get you a few sets of questions with different difficulty levels by tomorrow,"* he said confidently.

David chimed in, *"I'm pretty good with music—I can make a few tracks with different vibes for each difficulty."*

I nodded. *"Perfect. Then I'll handle the coding and visuals. Alright, boys… let's rock!"*

All of us shouted in unison: *"Hell yeah!"*

By this time, I realized that previously I had no idea about Saifur's talent for research, and I had no clue that David was so good at making music.

This time around, I was actually learning about the lives of the people around me—and how much I had ignored them like a fool.

And with this simple idea, I had managed to bring Saifur and David closer, helping them become actual friends.

The school let us skip class for the science fair. We set up our "lab" at the school to work on visuals and coding.

Saifur's research proved to be surprisingly good. I couldn't resist teasing him. *"This is genius… for an idiot like you."*

Saifur's face turned red. Before I knew it, he was chasing me around the school, trying to kill me. Hahaha—it was a good time.

From her classroom, Joana was watching everything and actually laughing at the chaos. I caught her eye and smiled. Time seemed to freeze… but Saifur didn't.

He swung at me and landed a punch. Then he shouted, *"Aahhh! My hand! What are you made of—steel?!"*

I was confused at first. Later, I realized why—he had seen me smiling at Joana and didn't want me to look like a fool in front of her. David saw all of this. From his facial expression it looked like he was proud of me.
We decided to name ourselves "*The Knightmares"*.

The school wasn't too thrilled with the idea. But David confidently said, *"Sir, we're wolves in sheep's clothing. This is a way to catch the judges by surprise."*

The headmaster burst out laughing and, surprisingly, accepted it.

And we were ready for war! We were ready for the science fair!
[End of Chapter 5]

Chapter 6 :
Moments That Matter

The science fair finally began. David, Saifur, and I made our way to the venue, carrying our gear.

David had brought his laptop, but it had a major issue—it would randomly turn off and restart. We worried that if the judges arrived, we might not even be able to show our project.

Saifur shook his head. *"This laptop is as shitty as you, David. Couldn't you have brought a broken calculator instead to run the game?"*

David didn't miss a beat. *"The only broken calculator I know of is you."*

I couldn't help but smile. In just a short time, these two, who had once barely gotten along, were now fast friends. All because I had decided to spend more time with them—and give my own time a purpose.

We called the school, and the teachers told us to wait—they had just the thing for us.

Right before the science fair started, the school and our entire class came to check on us. The teacher handed us a high-quality laptop to use. With it, we were finally able to showcase our game.

Soon, the entire class was playing. A huge line formed, and students from other schools, curious about the commotion, started lining up to try it as well.

David and I looked at each other in disbelief. *"Dude! We're gonna win!"* I exclaimed.

Saifur smirked, showing off his usual attitude. *"If you have a member like me on your team, of course we're going to win."*

David shot back, *"If we lose, I'm calling you Shitty Saifur for the rest of my life!"*

We all burst out laughing. For the first time, it felt like our hard work was paying off—and the game we had poured our hearts into was being enjoyed by so many people!

Joana came by and smiled at me. *"I played your game,"* she said. *"I'm really impressed at how talented you are."*

David and Saifur walked up right behind her.

"Well," David said with a grin, *"we couldn't have done anything without our handsome and single friend, Ariyan."*

Saifur added, *"Yes… sir, he's the best in the class."*

I chuckled, feeling a warm mix of pride and embarrassment. For once, it wasn't just about winning—it was about how far we'd all come together.

Then Joana's boyfriend appeared and extended his hand. *"Hey, you must be that talented guy Joana keeps talking about. I'm Basim, her boyfriend."*

Joana smiled and said, *"Yes! This right here is my other half."*

I managed a small smile and told Basim, *"You're a lucky guy."*

After they walked away, I ran to the bathroom and let the tears fall.

Both Saifur and David chased after me. David shook his head, *"Dude! We've got a science fair to win. You can't just cry over a girl right now!"*

Saifur added, *"Yeah man, talk about it later. These things happen. Rejection… it makes a man stronger!"*

I wiped my tears, taking their words to heart. Life was still moving forward, and there were bigger things at stake.

Then the judges arrived. They seemed genuinely impressed with our project, but in the end, we didn't win anything.

"It's a good plan," they said, *"but the game is fairly simple to make."*

I couldn't deny they were right—but it still stung a little.

After the judges left, Saifur clapped me on the back. *"It was never about winning,"* he said. *"It was about making memories and having a good time. And I, for one, will remember this moment for the rest of my life."*

David chimed in with a grin, *"I agree, Shitty Saifur!"*

We all laughed, and in that moment, I realized something important: the real victory wasn't a trophy—it was the bond we'd built, the laughter, and the second chance we had to be there for each other.

[Next chapter Crossroads of Fate]

Chapter 7 :
Crossroads of Fate

The finals were upon us. We had only a month to prepare. David, Saifur, Joana, and I started studying together at school. Even though Joana was meant for someone else, David and Saifur told me, *"Until school ends, just enjoy the moments with her."*

I took their advice, and we all became really good friends… best friends, if that word still meant anything.

Tutoring David, however, was no easy task. His autism made it difficult for him to remember things, so we had to get creative. We came up with cheat codes—memory tricks to help him retain information.

For example, in accounting, we taught him:

We taught David a little cheat code to remember credits and debits. I said:

"Think of ALED—Assets, Liabilities, Equity, Debits. It's easy if you remember:

- **Assets** increase → **Debit**
- **Liabilities** increase → **Credit**
- **Equity** increases → **Credit**
- **Expenses** increase → **Debit**
- **Revenue/Income** increases → **Credit**

So whenever you're confused, just shout: 'ALED rules the school!'"

David laughed and said, *"Okay… ALED, got it!"*

The finals were over. I ran to see the results. Funny thing—usually I'm only worried about myself, but this time I was worried about David.

And… unfortunately, he didn't pass.

I went straight to him and asked, *"Hey… you feeling suicidal or anything?"*

He laughed. *"Hahaha, no. The principal might give me a chance because of my condition, so don't worry."*

I asked if I could accompany him home. He shook his head. *"No, I like long walks alone. It's weird, but it kind of makes me feel alive. Anyway, you should check up on Joana. Seems she and her boyfriend are having some breakup issues. Now's your chance, boy! Go for it!"*

I laughed and shook my head, realizing life kept moving—even when the stakes felt impossibly high. I tried to walk away from David, but when I saw him leaving, I ran after him. Even though he said he was fine, I was terrified. I didn't want him to die.

And then—Knull appeared at the school gate. My imaginary friend. Only this time, he looked different. Gone was the devilish grin. Instead, his eyes were wet, his face broken, as though he had been crying.

"Get out of my way," I told him.

But his response froze me in place.
"You have passed the test. You did everything a human should do—you helped others, even when there was no benefit for you. I'm afraid… this is the end of your test."

"Cut the bullshit!" I shouted. "Let me go after David!"

"You should listen to Knull, Ariyan."

I spun around. My stomach dropped. Saifur stood there.

"What the hell…? You can see him?" My voice cracked.

Saifur's face was pale, almost hollow. "Yeah. Some of us knew you weren't just talking to yourself. At first we thought you were crazy, but after reaching the second timeline, we

realized… the entity was real. You'd ask for two cups of water, two pieces of bread—like someone was eating with you. You even started saying *we* instead of *I*."

My chest tightened. "What are you talking about? What test? What the hell is going on?"

Saifur's eyes filled with tears. He shook his head, whispering, "Ariyan… thank you for all you did for us. But this is where it ends. You were amazing."

And then I saw them. The entire class was standing behind him. Their faces streaked with tears. Their voices trembling as one:

"We've been dead for a long time."

[End of Chapter 7]

Chapter 8 :
The Living Among Dead

I woke up in a hospital bed, my head heavy and the air thick with antiseptic. A small TV was playing in the corner of the room. A documentary was running—something about trains.

The narrator's voice was calm, but the words struck me like knives.
It spoke about how countless people had died walking along rail lines, never hearing the train horns that blared behind them. Scientists believed it wasn't always suicide, but something else—how sound waves sometimes bent away, leaving the doomed deaf to their own end.

A thought tore through my chest.
David.

All this time, everyone said he *chose* to die. But what if he didn't? What if the world itself silenced the warning?

My mother looked at me with eyes swollen from tears. The moment she saw me awake, she collapsed onto my chest, holding me as if she would never let go.

"Oh, my sweet Ariyan," she sobbed. "I've been waiting a year for this day… a whole year. You're finally back. You're alive. Thank the Almighty!"

Her words froze me.
A year?

My throat tightened. "What… what do you mean, a year?"

She pulled back slowly, her face trembling between joy and sorrow.
"You've been in a coma, Ariyan. Since the graduation ceremony… since the crash."

The crash. The school. My friends.
David. Saifur. Joana.

The memories came flooding back, too vivid to dismiss as dreams—yet too broken to make sense.

She whispered the words as if saying them out loud would break me further.

“After the graduation ceremony… a plane crashed. It fell directly on the school.” Her voice cracked. “Everyone was killed—burned alive. Every student, every friend you had… gone. Except you. Somehow, by some miracle, you survived. The Almighty saved you.”

Her words hung in the air like chains around my chest.

All of them. Dead.
Everyone!

My mind fractured. Which timeline was real?
Was it the one where I wasted my life staring at clocks, lost in panic and isolation?
Or was it the one where I fought back, reached out, and made friends—where I laughed, where we dreamed together, even if only for a moment?

I turned my head and froze.
On the bedside table was a photograph.

It was me, Saifur, and David, standing shoulder to shoulder at the science fair. David was grinning wide, his arm slung across my shoulder. Saifur had his usual cocky smirk. And I was smiling too.

The picture was real.
The memories were real.
They had always been real.

The first timeline… never happened?
All those lonely years, the silence, the isolation—were they just my nightmares?

And if the second timeline was real, then what does that make me?
Did I somehow get a second chance? A gift from something higher?
Or was it just my dying brain clinging to hope, creating a world where I didn’t waste everything?

I stared at the photograph again. Saifur's smirk. David's smile. My own laugh frozen in time.
It wasn't just in my head. It *happened.*

Maybe the timelines weren't separate at all.
Maybe they were both me.
The one who wasted everything—and the one who fought to change.
Maybe this was life's cruel way of showing me that even the smallest choices, even the smallest kindness, could change the meaning of everything.

But then came the question that burned me the most:
Why was I the one who survived?
Why me… and not them?

When the teachers came, their eyes softened in a way I had never seen before.
One said, "Ariyan, you reminded us that even in pain, laughter could exist."
Another whispered, "You gave your classmates courage, even when you didn't realize it."

Parents I barely knew clasped my hands and told me that their children spoke about me—
about how I stood up when silence weighed heavy,
about how I reminded them life wasn't just about studying or waiting for something better,
but about *living*.

Me? Ariyan? The boy who once thought he didn't matter,
the boy who was afraid of being forgotten—
somehow, I had left pieces of myself in them.
Hope. Courage. Light.

And yet, as their voices praised me, I felt the weight of it all sink deeper.
How could they see me as a hero,
when I was the one left behind, breathing,
while all the true heroes—the ones who changed me—were gone?

After the hospital released me, I visited every single one of their graves. I prayed for them. This time, I didn't ask myself whether these rotting corpses were the ones I was looking for—or whether it was their souls. I just stood there, in front of their graves, thinking about the happy

moments I shared with them. About how, in some small way, I made everyone's lives—including mine—worth living.

It's true. People die. There are countless graves in the graveyards. I don't recognize most of them, but every single one had a story. And every story matters. Because a person always leaves an effect on other people's lives—whether good or bad. People's lives never go entirely in vain.

Even if a hundred years from now no one remembers me, my struggles, or my stories, it doesn't matter. For now, I am alive. And in me live the memories of all my friends who were lost. Wherever I go, part of them will always remain with me.

After that day, I stopped seeing Knull. As if he never existed. I could try to make sense of everything—but something tells me I can't. My story is just one of thousands, and the world will not suffer if it ends too soon. But that doesn't make life meaningless. People who die become part of someone else. And in time, even those memories fade.

…but that doesn't make the world meaningless. People who die become a part of someone else. Their memories linger, shaping lives, leaving traces. And then, after a few hundred years, even they become no one.

This story is dedicated to no one.
This story is dedicated to… everyone who ever mattered, even if only for a moment.

[The End]

A TRIBUTE TO A LOST SOUL NAMED "SHORON"

They vanish, like whispers carried on the wind, leaving only echoes in the water, laughter, poses of a bloom. Remembered before the beginning. This is a tribute. To hands we couldn't hold, to futures unwritten, to friendships forged in fleeting moments and forever held in the heart's quiet chambers. For those who remember. For every star lost too soon, this is for the star that still shines brightly in our night sky.

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